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ABSTRACT

The Exploring Together Outdoors Program is an Australian program that integrates family therapy interventions with adventure therapy, providing an opportunity for mother/child dyads that have conflictual relationships to develop more positive connections. This paper focuses on a group of four mothers and their four daughters who participated in 2 adventure therapy weekends and a family day 1 year later. A description of program activities focuses on the changed context of mother-child interaction, support and influence of the group, and creation by mother-daughter pairs of more positive narratives about each other. Questionnaires about changed perceptions of competence in self and other, and changed relationships within the mother-child dyad were completed after each occasion. All parties reported important changes in how they saw themselves and the other family member: these changes included more positive feelings for each other, less conflict, more communication, a greater sense of physical competence, and increased personal confidence. These results are discussed in terms of blending certain family therapy practices with adventure therapy, which triggers thoughts about aspects of life quite different from everyday matters, and promotes quite different perspectives from which to view one's parent, one's child, or oneself. Nine tables present comparisons of the mothers' and daughters' responses to nine questions. Appendices include additional tables of responses. (Contains 22 references.) (TD)

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Exploring Together Outdoors: A Family Therapy Approach based in the Outdoors

By Robyn Mulholland & Antony Williams

Abstract

Four mothers and their four daughters who were experiencing conflictual relationships were taken on two adventure therapy weekends followed by a family day. Questionnaires regarding changed perceptions of competence in self and other, and changed relationships within the mother-child dyad were completed after each occasion. All parties reported important changes in how they saw themselves and the other family member: these changes included more liking of each other, less conflict, more communication, a greater sense of physical competence and increased personal confidence. These results are discussed in terms of blending certain family therapy practices with adventure therapy.

Introduction

Having mothers and daughters in a workshop together may in itself be unusual. Pregan-Simon (1987) conducted one such workshop in the US with thirty-three participants. The theme of their workshop had been connectedness and separation. The workshop was run over six sessions and did not involve wilderness experience. We have been unable to find reports of mother/daughter work using adventure therapy, though in all probability it does go on unreported. Despite lack of reports, the senior author was convinced that an outdoor challenge experience, combined with appropriate therapeutic interventions, would be useful for mothers and daughters in trouble.

The Exploring Together Outdoors Program was therefore set up as part of the Family Skills Project at Broadmeadows Family Services. By integrating family therapy interventions with adventure therapy, the program provides an opportunity for mother/child dyads that have a conflictual relationship to develop more positive connections.

To participate in the program, the mothers must first have attended a parenting skills group. There, they gain some understanding of factors underlying their children's behaviour, improve their communication skills, learn behaviour management techniques,

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and practice problem solving. The age range for the children participating in Exploring Together Outdoors is from seven to eleven years, with a maximum of two years' difference between them on any one program. Two female staff experienced in both family therapy and adventure therapy facilitated the group of four mothers and their four children.

The program begins with a three-day outdoor challenge weekend based around camping in the bush, extended walks and other activities such as rockclimbing and abseiling, canoeing, or in the case of the group described in this article, horse trail riding. After the first weekend there is a follow-up meeting, a second outdoor challenge weekend some months later, and finally a family day.

Rational for the Program

Adventure therapy.

The facilitators hope that by changing the context of interactions between mother and child, changes will occur in the interactions themselves. It is a common human experience to have different conversations, even with the same person, that are brought about by a different setting: the kind of talk one might have with someone in a Turkish bath is different from that I would have in the kitchen at home. One's discourse whilst body surfing is likely to differ from that conducted whilst channel-surfing. In terms of the Exploring Together Outdoors program, the way a mother speaks to her daughter from the swaying back of a large horse is not the same, as she would have sitting in the back of a car. If a mother is attempting to control a horse, and her daughter is beside her attempting the same, the interaction between them takes on a particular intensity, and might be accompanied by urgency, fear, exaltation, watchfulness or delight. The back of a horse, or the edge of a cliff certainly provides opportunity for what Bandorff & Scherer (1994) call "therapeutic unbalancing." The physical and emotional stress of the experience, as well as the amount of time the dyad is together without everyday distractions, accelerates the likelihood of emotional intensity. The "spirit of the bush" may also play its part: seeing a herd of kangaroos leaping across the paddock at the sight of humans; cooling off under a waterfall; the smell of eucalypts in the heat of the sun; and being woken at dawn by the sound of laughing kookaburras.

Yet, the intensity physical activities in and of themselves are not necessarily "therapeutic." When do they become so? Mothers and daughters participating in adventure activities together, each struggle with the unknown. Because the activities are equally new to each, it is okay, at the time or at the end of the day, to admit weakness and fear. There is also the opportunity for members of each dyad to begin to notice positive qualities in each other. The parent, especially, is able to view her child in a new light of competence and capability as each of them grapples with unfamiliar challenges of survival (Bandorff & Scherer, 1994). In this struggle, and in taking up her new view, the mother is supported by the group facilitators to try out different parenting strategies. The therapy is not so much in the adventure itself, though it is helpful to step outside one's normal areas of competence and comfort. The therapy evolves out of the adventure triggering quite different aspects of life to think about, and quite different lights in which to view one's parent, one's child, or for that matter, oneself. The muscle in adventure therapy is less important than the mind — but it does matter. The "muscle" involved in

doing challenging activities together helps to disrupt homeostatic interactive patterns that maintain problem behaviour.

The small group environment provides an opportunity for reinforcing the experience of acceptance and accepting. Those who speak may experience acceptance from peers and learn more about negotiating their reality in the world through self-disclosure. Even a person who does not say very much can vicariously learn from her peers. The group's acceptance of her silence gradually gives her the confidence to engage further. The formally withdrawn Molly says, "I was able to talk about anything; I was feeling good, instead of inadequate." Nine year old Colleen reflects that "other people are the same as me, they don't have their dads. That has been good."

The group forms a powerful matrix for individual conversations: the mother and child "notice aloud" things about each other and the other mothers and children also observe and comment. Even small changes are expanded by this commentary: "When there is evidence of progress, even if it is meagre, talking about it allows the conversation to move naturally towards such constructive subjects as what made the improvement possible and who did what to bring it about" (Furman & Ahola, 1992, p110). Interactions between all parties provide material for review and coaching by the group leaders. It must be said that not all the talk is about the day's adventure: adventure and heroic deeds provide only the conversation's starting point. At the end of the day, children go off to play, and the mothers talk about parenting, budgeting, schooling, men, sex, contraception, their aspirations, their beliefs and other topics dear to nearly everyone's heart. Sitting around a campfire seems to entice this type of conversation, so difficult to have if one is competing with TV, telephones, harsh lights and other everyday demands.

In short, most of Yalom's (1985) celebrated "therapeutic factors" for groups are met: interpersonal learning input via feedback; interpersonal learning output via new behaviour; installation of hope via noting progress of others; guidance — receiving advice or suggestions from the leaders or fellow members and so on. Even the mothers' apparently casual talk of life, sex, parenting etc. is a powerful group therapeutic factor, which Yalom calls "universality." Last of all, the existential factor. Adventure itself brings this to the forefront: though on the adventure there is always someone to help, one also is conscious in the moment of real or perceived danger, that one faces life alone and takes responsibility for it.

Family therapy.

The adventure therapy component of the program did not seek to create heroic individuals; rather, a change in relationship between mother and daughter was ambitioned. Family therapists tend to believe that "when there is a shift in the nature of interaction among family members, this makes it possible for the individual to change, and when the individual member changes, the rest of the family will be affected in turn" (Berg, 1994, p8). "Family therapy" used to be more rigid in its views, suggesting that the only effective way to change anyone was to change the large system around them. The word "family" no longer necessarily includes "mum, dad and the kids," since they may not have seen each other for some time. "Family" can now mean many different combinations of adults and children. It is accepted in current practice that one may see individuals, families or parts of families and still call one's work "family therapy." Even in working with individuals, one can maintain a "systemic focus." The program subscribes to the belief that it is easier and more lastingly effective to change a troubled

system if at least the most relevant parts of that troubled system are present. In the context of this program, the most relevant parts of the system are the mother and daughter.

Since its inception almost 40 years ago, a variety of theories and approaches to family therapy have emerged (Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 1985). As with individual psychotherapy, there appears to be no comprehensive theory of family therapy acceptable to all practitioners, nor a unitary method of clinical intervention (Smyrnios and Kirkby, 1992). Common to family therapy approaches, however, is the notion that behaviour emanates from the context in which it occurs: the set of family relationships and its interface with other social systems. Whatever their origin, problems are maintained by the current interactions within the system and frequently emerge when the family is faced with a major life stage transition (James and McKinnon, 1986). The approach does not necessarily seek to create insight on the part of the family members, nor is it interested in the recovery of feelings *per se*. It is also characteristic of most family therapy approaches to eschew linear explanations in favour of circular explanations and circular interactive patterns around a complaint (Selvini Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin & Prata, 1980). By taking away the mothers and daughters together, one has a better chance of observing these circular patterns and drawing attention to them. We are particularly interested in "virtuous cycles" (when something is going well) rather than "vicious cycles" of interaction.

This interest in "virtuous cycles" is characteristic of our main intellectual sources in family therapy — Solution Focused Therapy (de Shazer 1985, 1988, 1991, Berg 1994) and Narrative Therapy (White & Epston 1989, 1989-1991). Using solution-focused therapy, we work with the participant's strengths rather than weaknesses, and pay attention to such things as when the mother is being competent, nurturing or responsible; or when the daughter is demonstrating pro-social skills, courage, independence or being resourceful. By acknowledging these competencies, we aim to strengthen the parent-child bond and empower the family as a unit. The participants are encouraged to give up the familiar, self-limiting stories they tell about themselves and to step into other possibilities in their lives. That is why one of the tasks for the mothers was for them to allow stories of success in their parenting to flourish, and for the daughters to allow stories of success in their being a responsible daughter and a likeable friend to emerge. It is a given in contemporary solution-focused and narrative therapies that reality consists of interpretations which arise from dialogue between interacting participants. The new stories that the mothers and daughters tell about themselves and each other become "reality" just as the old stories had been. The shift in this type of therapy is away from therapy as "science" with the therapist as sole expert and arbiter of therapeutic outcome. The move is towards a collaboration of client and therapist, with profound respect for the inherent competencies of the client to create and construct new meanings (Cantwell & Holmes 1994).

Program Description

At the time of recruitment, participants were interviewed to brief them on the program and to determine their suitability. The philosophy of the program was outlined; mothers and daughters were told that although there is an element of fun, the purpose of the program is essentially therapeutic — the outdoors is a context for new ways of being together. They were also told of the physical nature of the program and asked whether

they feel able to participate actively. The participants were finally selected according to criteria which included their desire to improve their relationship with their child, a reasonable level of physical fitness and their commitment to the time required to complete the program.

When the group first came together at the arranged meeting place on Day 1, time was spent linking participants through the use of sociometry. Briefly, sociometry is a way in which a group of people measures itself, conversationally or in action, along various lines of similarity, dissimilarity and choice (Moreno, 1946; Hale, 1981; Williams, 1991). Non-threatening sociometric criteria included: child's place in family; prior experience with some of the activities; who knows who; school year; parents connection to BFS; who has been away from their family before, and so on... Using these and other criteria, and expressing differences spatially, the group obtained an early and painless "read-out" on itself. In order to lessen some of the anxieties and barriers they may have brought with them, group members were also encouraged to share their wishes and fears about the weekend. Group rules were established around caring for the environment, safety issues, participation and group process. Consequences of breaching these rules, especially those around safety, were agreed upon ("Discussion about the issue"; "1st warning"; "2nd warning"; then "Time-out for the third breach").

On arrival at the campsite, each dyad was issued with camping equipment and instructed how to select a site, pitch a tent, and ensure waterproof storage of their belongings. Firewood was gathered and once the chores are done, participants were encouraged to explore their surroundings. With this invitation the first of the safety rules immediately comes into practice: "Outside the camp always go with someone else and tell an adult where you are going." This time of exploring allowed participants to gain a sense of unity and harmony with the environment that can come with being in the bush.

Each day's activity was chosen so that success was highly likely; mastery of the task and its associated fears was intended to lead to feelings of achievement and increased confidence. At times the child might have superior physical skills — more agility, for example, while in another activity the mother's experience of life may be what enables her to succeed at the task. The strangeness of the physical environment for these intensely urban women and children presented many confronting moments. Yet it provided them with the opportunity to be of emotional and physical support to one another, and to experience themselves behaving in new ways.

The evening sessions were used for individuals to reflect and process the day's activities. Each person was asked about the day's high point and low point for them, and other questions deliberately designed to highlight differences — before/after; when they were afraid/when they weren't; when they felt connected with each other and when they did not. This battery of questions about difference is designed to bring "news of difference" (Bateson, 1980) — appreciation of contrast that leads to change. The leaders also focus on the two audiences of change — audience of self and audience of other (White & Epston 1989-1991). Thus "What have you noticed about yourself today?" is a question inviting personal reflection; the person becomes audience to her own performance (audience of self). Questions soliciting a fantasy of what other people might have noticed: "What do you think your Mum saw in you today that might have surprised her?" are "audience of other" questions. Unreported change tends to go unnoticed and to die out, whereas change that is reported as being performed before these two audiences becomes magnified by the questions: it tends to increase in significance for the speaker. All the participants were taught simple principles of the reflecting process, and the group

acted as a "reflecting team" offering the possibility for each individual, as they listen to the team, to ask themselves new questions, thereby drawing new distinctions (Anderson, 1991).

When the more structured processes were completed, there was time for music making — singing and playing instruments around the campfire — and/or everyone gave or received an orchestrated group massage. Even though all parties were clothed, this physical contact involved much trust and high dedication from the group, since many of the women have experienced physical and sexual abuse. When they have assured themselves that this is a safe arena for touching, both the mothers and the children seemed to relish the contact and nurturing of many hands.

Participants spent the afternoon of the last day reflecting, prompted by the use of a questionnaire, on their own and their dyads' achievements and changes. Each mother/child dyad then shared their insights with one another before finally sharing in the whole group.

Three weeks later the group met for afternoon tea and to view photographs. During this time, they are asked, "What has been the most significant change in your relationship since the weekend?" and "What was the most helpful thing about the weekend?" These questions were aimed to reinforce the noticing of difference which could help new stories about the relationship develop.

The follow-up weekend, three months later, took place at a different outdoor site. The aim once more is to provide opportunities for the development of a positive relationship between mother and child, increased sense of competency in outdoor challenge activities, heightened self-awareness, learning about oneself through feedback, and practicing new ways of responding to particular situations. The format is the same as described for the first weekend, and again a questionnaire was completed.

The final aspect of the program occurred three months later; it involved all persons from the four families spending a day together in the bush participating in outdoor activities. This day was designed so that the rest of the family could better relate to what the mother and child had been taking part in throughout the program. The dyads completed, for the last time, a questionnaire focused on comparing the mother/child relationship and looking at personal insights.

The program period incorporated the initial parenting group; weekends and family day is about one year. The results to be presented next are from the first completed group. Since then, the senior author has completed other groups with mothers and daughters, as well as one group with mothers and sons. She has also conducted adventure processes, along similar lines, with mothers and daughters in the deaf community. For the present study, all participants willingly gave their permission to be quoted and for their answers to the research questions to be published. Their names have been changed: for the sake of clarity, each pseudonymous child's name begins with 'C' and each mother's with 'M'. Results are usually presented in dyads – i.e., Carly is Mary's daughter, Corina is Melissa's and so on.

Participant Profiles

Mary, 31 years old, presented as isolated and lonely. She had been sexually abused as a child, lacked confidence in her ability to parent, had financial problems and was "very depressed." She had two children, with Carly being the eldest. Mary's difficulty with

Carly was expressed by an apparent dislike of her. She alternated between apparent indifference to Carly or seemed overdemanding of her.

Carly, 7 years old, was eager to be involved in the group but was constantly seeking her mother's attention. She had difficulties making friends and in observed group situations prior to the outdoors program, tested the basic rules of the group, yet appeared relieved that there were some.

Melissa, 33 years old, was ten when her mother died, and soon after, upon the death of her father, was placed in an institution where she was sexually abused. In the group, she showed an apparent need to be "in control." She had marital problems around her husband's drinking and gambling, was finding it hard to show emotion or to meet her children's emotional demands, and had difficulty in seeing positive aspects in any of their three children. Melissa complained of Corina's stealing and lack of caring for her siblings.

Corina, 8 years old, and like Carly, the eldest, was reserved and unsure of herself, stealing at home and at school. Corina appeared anxious with her mother, as if the relationship were highly unpredictable. In her mother's presence she presented as anxious and cautious, when her mother was not there she appeared more like a very sad child.

Michelle, 35 years old, was depressed and had been suicidal on and off since the unresolved breakdown of her marriage. She evidenced a great sense of desperation and impotence as a parent of two children. Her relationship with Cilla, the youngest child, was very hostile.

Cilla, 7 years old, had been kicking and hitting at school and having difficulties with peer relationships. She had an inappropriate wish to be an adult; e.g., wearing sanitary pads, makeup, and attempting sexualized kissing. She "dominated" the family, and operated from a long history of "being in charge."

Molly, 36 years old, was alcoholic and still grieving from an unexpected separation from her husband. She was sexually abused as child, had a poor self-image and formed violent, aggressive relationships, towards her four children, she was verbally abusive and "hated" physical contact with them. She considered Colleen to be "an absolute smarty-pants".

Colleen was 9 years old. Confident, she stood up to her mother. Unlike her mother, who thought of herself as "no one", Colleen seemed to like herself and was proud of the things she could do.

Method

Questionnaires.

A simple questionnaire was generated specifically for the program. It needed to be such that both mothers and children could answer more or less the same questions. There were nine questions in all. The researchers understood that each question, as well as soliciting information, also provides information — "news of difference" — to the respondents. They were aware that to ask, for example, "What was different between you and your mother (child) this weekend?" (Question 1) triggers thinking about such differences. Other questions, such as "What have you appreciated in your mother (child) this weekend?" "What is one physical capability you didn't think you had, that you have discovered?" and so on are hardly neutral. They are designed to give information to the researcher, but they also are intended to push forward the work of the program. The workers believe that a researcher in social science inevitably influences the research

itself, and that "neutral experimenter" is an impossibility in any case (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall, 1989).

Question 7, "Who do you think would be surprised at you having these abilities?" This question creates an "audience of other" (White & Epston, 1989-1991) awareness in the respondent as well as doing its face-value job of informing the researcher. The former task was regarded as the most important. Similarly, question 8: "If you continued to have these capabilities, where do you think they would lead you?" projects the respondent's mind into a future of competence, as well as letting us know the answer.

Administration of questionnaire.

The questionnaire was administered on the last afternoon of the weekend, just before everyone left for home. One facilitator worked with the parents, the other with the children, only offering help if a person had difficulty understanding a question or with writing. The facilitators attempted to be as "neutral" as possible, within the constraints outlined above.

Despite the brevity of the questionnaire, the process took two hours to complete. Mother and child wrote their answers in separate groups; then each of mother and child dyads got together to discuss what they had written. After this more intimate process, all parties returned to the large group and shared what they wished to speak of with the other dyads and the facilitators.

Because of the volume of the results, and the number of times participants were questioned, only the results at the end of the first and second weekend are presented here. The reports from the photo meeting three weeks after the first weekend, and results from the final group meeting — the family day — are displayed in Appendix A & B. None of these results contradict what is presented here, and the reader is encouraged to peruse the Appendices for confirmation.

Results

Results from the 1st and 2nd weekends questionnaire are presented based on the questions asked.

Question one was "What are two things that have been better, worse or different between you and your mother / child this weekend?" A comparison of the results is presented in Table 1.

In the period after Weekend 1, the major changes that mothers and daughters noticed was the lessening of aggression, as indicated by the frequent response " We didn't yell." After the second weekend, the focus changed to one of less worry, more responsibility taken and given, and managing behaviour in ways other than fighting and yelling.

The comparison of the responses for the two weekends for question two is presented in Table 2. The second question was "What things have you appreciated in your mother / child this weekend?"

Table 1
A Comparison of the Responses for Question one

Name	Weekend 1	Weekend 2
Carly	M. not yelling. M. happier	M. wasn't growling
Mary	Didn't yell or annoy each other	C. was more independent
Corina	M not yelling, was smiling and being nice.	M. better at horseriding
Melissa	Didn't yell, fight. Less anguish	Less fighting and arguing.
Cilla	No fighting, more fun with M.	M let me go to the creek. Didn't force me horseriding.
Michelle	C. more responsible.	C. being responsible
Colleen	Liked the same things as other.	M. was proud of me and gave me more freedom.
Molly	I less angry, C less demanding	C having fun. I worried less.

Table 2.
Comparison of Responses for Question two

Name	Weekend 1	Weekend 2
Carly	M. said something nice to me. M. can bushwalk	More freedom
Mary	C. less whingeing /dependent. C. tried to get along with kids.	C. independence and fairness Not whingeing so much.
Corina	M. went horseriding.	M. horseriding. Not yelling
Melissa	C. more independent	C. left me alone and went horseriding when scared.
Cilla	M. let me do more myself	M. lets me do more things.
Michelle	Just having her	C. didn't do something she didn't want to.
Colleen	M. could horseride	M. let me do anything.
Molly	C. well behaved. Pleased with her stickability horseriding.	C. more independent. Supported others horseriding even when scared.

During the first weekend the children were mostly appreciating their mother's physical prowess, while for the mothers, it was their child showing greater independence, which pleased them, most. By the end of the second weekend, both mothers and daughters indicated that freedom and independence were the most appreciated quality in the other.

The third question was "What are some physical capabilities you didn't think you had that you have discovered?" A comparison for the two weekends for this question is presented in Table 3.

Table 3
A Comparison of Responses for Question Three

Name	Weekend 1	Weekend 2
Carly	Horseriding and bushwalking	Throwing a frisbee
Mary	More stamina	Enjoyed bushwalking and being with other people.
Corina	Working the reins	Trotting the horse
Melissa	Controlled anger, horseriding	Horseriding
Cilla	Horseriding	Feeding a horse
Michelle	Patience, horseriding	Own being wrong. To apologise
Colleen	Horseriding	Not scared horseriding
Molly	Bushwalking	Helping 2 kids run away from a cow

All participants reported discovering new physical capabilities, with the children in particular using the second weekend's activities to build on the skills they had developed during weekend one. This is demonstrated in Corina's statements where on the first weekend she discovered she could "work the reins" and on the second weekend found she could "trot the horse." Horseriding was clearly a highly favoured activity, eclipsed only by cow avoidance.

Question four was "What have you noticed about your thinking that is different?" The responses for both weekends for this question are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.
Comparison of the Responses to Question Four

Name	Weekend 1	Weekend 2
Carly	I can have fun	Feel better, less angry.
Mary	Need to make effort to enjoy what life has to offer.	Not dwelling on problems.
Corina	I know how to have fun.	Got on better with other kids.
Melissa	I don't have to be on C. back all the time.	Less angry and stressed.
Cilla	I know how to make friends.	Happy, less sad.
Michelle	Need to be more tolerant	To try, even when afraid.
Colleen	Other people are same as me; they don't have their dads. That's been good.	Happy, not sad.
Molly	Realised I can get on well with others.	Less stressed, more relaxed.

The response to this question on the first weekend by most of the children and Molly was about being able to have fun and make friends, while for Colleen the normalisation of the family situation was significant. The other three mothers acknowledged the need to

change some aspect of their behaviour, particularly being more relaxed and tolerant. After the second weekend there was a strong focus from all on being less angry and stressed, less sad, and more relaxed and happy.

Question five was "What capabilities did you notice in yourself when mixing with others?" Comparisons of the responses for this question are presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Comparison of Responses to Question Five

Name	Weekend 1	Weekend 2
Carly	Fit in with others, more polite.	Mix with others better.
Mary	Able to talk and interact with others. To be patient.	Compromise; see other points of view.
Corina	Made friends with Colleen who I didn't know.	Less fighting. Less yelling with M.
Melissa	Laughing and enjoying others.	Nothing
Cilla	I know how to listen.	Patience with other kids.
Michelle	I need to think before acting.	More assertive.
Colleen	Happy and excited.	Helped others horseriding.
Molly	Able to talk about anything. Feeling good, not inadequate.	Could be myself.

Both mothers and daughters noticed skills in friendship, social ability, and feelings of competency and wellbeing on weekend one. After the second weekend, several mentioned self-restraint leading to greater sociability while the remainder made various responses ranging from noticing "nothing" to being more assertive.

The sixth question in this study was "What do you think your mother / child has noticed about you this weekend?" Results for the comparison of the responses for this question are presented in Table 6.

Table 6
Comparison of the Responses for Question Six

Name	Weekend 1	Weekend 2
Carly	I got on with others.	Thinks I'm responsible.
Mary	I was patient.	I was sociable. Not yelling
Corina	I made friends.	Good at trotting a big horse.
Melissa	Nothing, she was busy having fun.	Not yelling.
Cilla	I listened.	I can be nice.
Michelle	Nothing, she was having fun.	Not confident, but give it a go.
Colleen	That I was happy. She gave me happy looks.	I'm responsible. Can horseride
Molly	I was talking to others.	Not yelling, played games.

On weekend one, all the children and two of the mothers thought their mother / child noticed that which they had all observed in themselves, while the other two mothers didn't believe the children had noticed anything about them. After the second weekend,

the replies to the question showed a growing ability to reverse roles with the other which perhaps enabled comment on capabilities other than those which they themselves had stated.

Question seven asked, "Who do you think would be surprised at you having these abilities?" The responses for the two weekends are presented in Table 7.

Table 7
Comparison of Responses for Question Seven

Name	Weekend 1	Weekend 2
Carly	Nana, dad, mum, family services	Mum, dad, nana, brother
Mary	M. in law, Carly, ex-husband, myself	Myself, Carly
Corina	Dad, mum	Dad, mum
Melissa	Myself	Corina, ex-husband
Cilla	Dad	Dad and mum
Michelle	Myself	No-one, they know me well
Colleen	Mum, nan, brothers, sisters	Dad, Nan, friends
Molly	Ex husband	Friends

It is difficult to interpret the significance of responses to this question. One might tentatively postulate a widening of awareness in the social atom of changes made by participants; for example, Melissa after the first weekend said that only she would be surprised at her having the social and physical capabilities. Michelle had also thought that only she noticed, but after the second weekend took it for granted that her friends were already aware of what she could do. Molly dropped her ex-husband from the list but included her friends. The children remained fairly constant in their projections of who would notice the changes in them.

The eighth question asked, " If you continued to have these capabilities, where do you think they would lead you?" The responses for this question over the two weekends are presented in Table 8.

Table 8
Comparison of Responses for Question Eight

Name	Weekend 1	Weekend 2
Carly	Happy and Mum would take me more places.	A lot of difference. I'd keep my temper down.
Mary	Confidence, happiness.	Happier, more sociable life.
Corina	I'd have more friends.	I'd feel happier.
Melissa	Quieter house	Quieter, happier home.
Cilla	I'd be a happy person.	I'd feel better
Michelle	Experiment with new ways and things.	Do a lot more with my life.
Colleen	More joyful	Very happy life.
Molly	Confident, relaxed	Less stressed and bad tempered

After both weekends most of the children believed these capabilities would lead to them feeling happier, whereas the mothers focused mainly on confidence in self. In addition, Carly after the second weekend thought her new capabilities would lead to greater anger management; Molly also mentioned an improvement in anger management.

The Final question asked, "What things will be useful to continue doing when you go home?" The responses for the ninth question are presented in Table 9.

Table 9
Comparison of the Responses for Question Nine

Name	Weekend 1	Weekend 2
Carly	Being polite and going horseriding.	I will be less angry.
Mary	Do more things with my kids.	To use all these capabilities.
Corina	Fight less with mum.	Trotting horse, fight less with other kids. Yell less with M.
Melissa	Control my anger and enjoy holidays.	Horseriding.
Cilla	Listen more.	Happy, less sad. Being patient.
Michelle	Holidays like this.	To believe in myself.
Colleen	Doing things with mum. Not being naughty.	Help other people.
Molly	Calm, relaxed.	Horseride, playing with my kids

In response to this question the children maintained a strong focus on positive behaviour, self-control and co-operation with their mothers, while the mothers were more interested in play, prowess and enjoyment. One of the specifics of the adventures, namely horseriding, seemed once again to make a strong impression, not just for the time, but as a future competence and was mentioned by four participants. Overall, the types of responses after weekend one and weekend two did not vary greatly. From the start, perhaps, both the mothers and daughters knew the remedy for conflict and misery: stay relaxed; participate in the physical world; enjoy each other; believe in yourself.

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of the program had been for mothers and daughters, who had been experiencing a conflictual relationship, to develop a more positive connection with each other. The results following from each stage of the program, as well as those from the Family Day after nearly one year, suggest that the program's aims were achieved.

The results immediately after each weekend have suggested that, so far as the mothers were concerned, they felt better about themselves, were more confident with their peers, and felt much more positive about their relationship with their child — especially with respect to conflict and aggression. These results were common to all four reporting times, even up to a year afterwards.

That the results held up after a period at home, even up to a year later, suggests the changes are robust. Mothers indicated that they had a greater understanding of their children, that they reasoned with their children more, were able to reverse roles with them, and in general communicated with them more often and more satisfactorily. They

felt better as parents, more in control, more reflective, less impulsive and less anxious. Each dyad had reported that they were happier with one another and "did" more together.

The program seemed to have been successful for the children, too: they noticed a more positive relationship coming from their mother to them — more amiability, trust and companionship; they also recognised their own ability to build and maintain friendships.

Exploring Together Outdoors requires many resources in terms of staffing and equipment: two staff facilitate a group of eight on each of the weekends and on the Family Day, camping equipment for ten is needed, as is a van and trailer. In the view of the Agency, the project was worth supporting on the grounds of reported success from other outdoor therapeutic programs for youth, the prior success of running its own mother-daughter groups "indoors," and the potential for the client group to make some significant changes in their lives. It seemed that this potential was realised.

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Appendix A

The responses to the questions asked during a meeting to look at photo meeting three weeks after the first weekend are presented in Table 10. The two questions asked were: 1) What has been the most significant change in your relationship since the weekend away? 2) What was the most helpful thing about the weekend? No analysis or interpretation is made of the data in Table 10.

Table 10: *Responses to Questions One and Two for the Photo Meeting*

Name	Question 1	Question 2
Mary	I explain more things to her and she does more things for me. We're working together more, rather than clashing. I feel as though we are on the right track, I have moved my focus off Carly and notice James more.	Comparing my lot with someone else's and realising I'm not too bad off.
Carly	Much better. Happier with each other.	Horseback riding, we both enjoyed that.
Melissa	It made me realise Corina is more responsible. Life's not so tough. I don't have to be so anxious. I take life more easy. We are on the right track. The situation is calmer.	To learn to take hold of a situation and do something about it rather than let it crumble around me.
Corina	It has been better. She trusts me more. We are happier with each other.	Mum letting me do things that other kids were allowed to do.
Michelle	Not yelling as much - thinking before I speak.	Even if I'm miserable I can still enjoy myself being with a group of people. When I get on with my own life it frees Cilla to get on with hers and then we clash less.
Cilla	We are a little bit better. Feel happier with each other.	I'm glad she went horseriding
Molly	Our relationship is heaps better but that's not so with the other kids. I saw Colleen differently - she worries more, isn't just a smartie pants. She has more feeling than I realised; she thinks of others not just herself.	To be away with strangers and to find I'm more competent as a human being than I ever realised and therefore I could appreciate Colleen's competency. It was the first time I hadn't felt left out in a group.
Colleen	We are understanding each other better.	That we did the same things and we do more things together now.

Appendix B

The responses to the five questions asked during the Family Day and final group meeting are presented in this appendix. The responses to questions one and two are presented in Table 11. The responses to questions three and four are presented in Figure 1. The fifth question is presented in Table 12. The five questions asked at this final meeting were: 1) What do you do differently now with your child / mum, compared to a year ago? 2) How do you think your child / mum is different to a year ago? 3) How often do you enjoy times with your child / mum now 4) How often did you enjoy times with you child / mum a year ago? 5) Which of the things that you discovered about yourself by coming to this group are you continuing to use? No analysis is presented for the data presented in this appendix.

Table 11
Responses to Questions One and Two for the Final Group Meeting

Name	Question 1	Question 2
Mary	I take the time to explain things to Carly. If Carly doesn't want to listen or understand, I don't let it steam me. I just ignore her unreasonableness. It is saving me a lot of stress. She's learning it no longer works on me (as much as it use to.)	I now see Carly as being a nicer child than I'd thought she was. I see her good qualities far better now. I see her not so good qualities as being mostly her own. I don't feel guilty all the time.
Carly	We talk more. We yell less.	She's nicer.
Melissa	I try to stop and think. Before, I would just start yelling.	What I thought was always naughty is just her nature, which I have to accept.
Corina	Go for bike rides and holidays.	She's nicer and more friendly."
Michelle	I explain to her only what she needs to know and I don't discuss everything in front of her.	I give her a go and don't rush in on every situation but view what is happening first.
Cilla	We go for walks together.	She fights less with Dad. She trusts me more.
Molly	I actually do things with her. I would never have done that a year ago. I would usually just sit and watch her and tell her to go away.	Well, a year ago Colleen annoyed the hell out of me and now she doesn't seem to annoy me as much. I understand her better, thanks to exploring together.
Colleen	Heaps of stuff. More outings. Lets me help around the house more	She seems to like being my Mum more. She's happier."

Figure 1. Responses to Questions Three and Four.

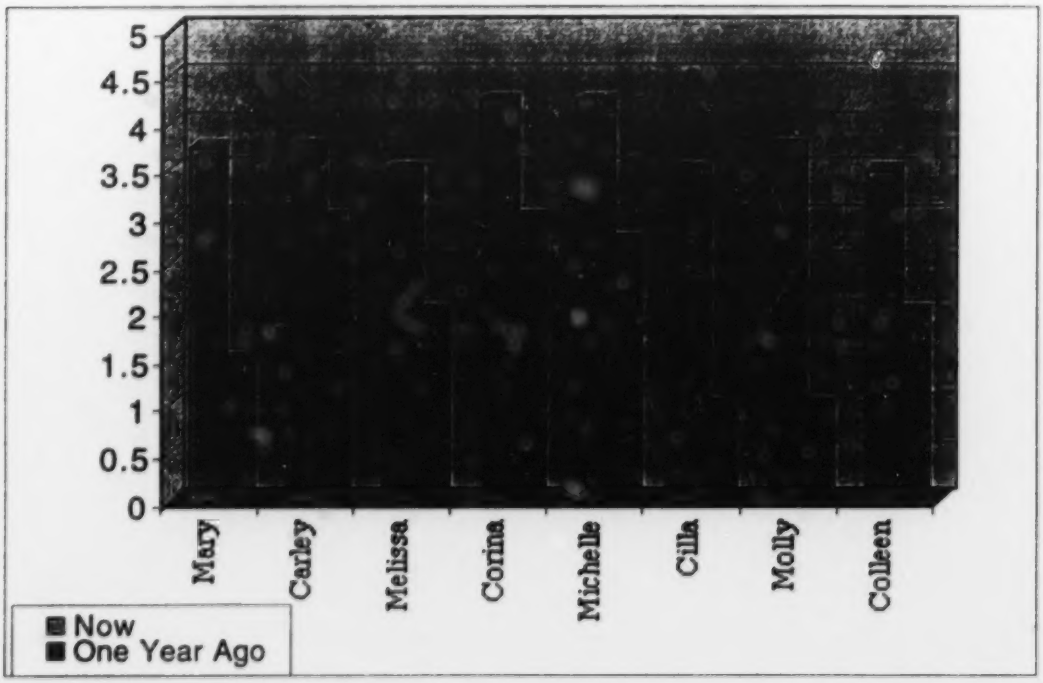

Table 12.
Responses to Question Five for the Final Group Meeting

Name	Question 5
Mary	TRY NOT TO OVER REACT TO SITUATIONS. I have more patience with both Carly and Jamie. I discovered that I'm not a bad parent, in many ways I'm a good parent. I discovered I could take back control from the kids and be an adult, the parent. (most of the time) I've learnt not to worry so much that the kids will hate me when they can't get what they want. I realise kids always have a love / hate relationship with Mum when they are young.
Carly	Love my Mum more.
Melissa	I stop and think rather than just start yelling. I try to be more patient and don't expect Corina to be older than she is. I realise that sometimes if you try things you will like doing them. I spend more time with Corina.
Corina	Horse riding. Being a good friend.
Michelle	Taking more risks than before, I've realised that taking a chance won't hurt but that sitting back is annoying.
Cilla	That I can be a good friend. I sometimes try doing new things.
Molly	Talking and understanding my child a lot better.
Colleen	Getting on better with others.

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